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INFO RUEHFK/AMCONSUL FUKUOKA 6237  
RUEHOK/AMCONSUL OSAKA KOBE 9455  
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TAGS: OITP KMDR KPAO JA

SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION RUSSIA - TOKYO

LEAD STORIES: Wednesday morning's conservative Sankei gave top play to a GOJ plan to settle the dispute regarding Japan's ban on US beef imports before PM Koizumi's meeting with President Bush in Washington set for late June.

¶1. "Putin Administration Needs to Show Dignity Befitting a G-8 Member" The conservative Sankei editorialized (5/17): "With the first G-8 summit in Russia only two months away, there are questions as to whether the host nation shares the values of freedom and democracy common to the G-8. The US and EU have deepening concerns and misgivings regarding the Kremlin's trend toward authoritarianism, which evokes images of the Soviet era. An article in the Russian paper Kommersant reacted strongly to Western concerns, saying that a second Cold War has essentially begun. In an address last week, President Putin called for the creation of a strong military backed by economic development from oil and natural gas exports, thus revealing his intent to make Russia a modernized military power capable of rivaling the US....

¶2. "Earlier this month in Lithuania, Vice President Cheney criticized Russia in an unprecedented tone for using its energy resources as a diplomatic cudgel against neighboring countries. The Washington Post also quoted a USG source as warning that the upcoming G-8 summit will fail.... President Putin's defiant attitude is probably due to the strong popular support he enjoys at home, and pursuing national interests in and of itself is acceptable.... If a new Cold War were to start, there would be no guarantee that Russia would not repeat the mistakes of the Soviet Union.... Russia is urged to show the dignity and self-control befitting a G-8 member."

DONOVAN